PERCY,

A

TRAGEDY.

AS IT IS ACTED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL

IN

COVENT-GARDEN.

By Hannah More

FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:

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Price ONE SHILLING and SIXPENCE.

TO

EARL PERCY:

This TRAGEDY,

AS

A SMALL TRIBUTE

To His Illustrious CHARACTER,

IS

VERY RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIB'D:

By His Lordship's

Most obedient

AND

Most humble Servant,

HANNAH MORE.

Dramatis Perſonæ.

MEN.

PERCY, } *Earl of Northumberland.* { Mr. LEWIS.

EARL DOUGLAS, Mr. WROUGHTON.

EARL RABY, *Elwina's Father*, Mr. AIKIN.

EDRIC, *Friend to Douglas*, Mr. WHITEFIELD.

HARCOURT, *Friend to Percy*, Mr. ROBSON.

SIR HUBERT, *a Knight*, Mr. HULL.

WOMEN.

ELWINA, Mrs. BARRY.

BIRTHA, Mrs. JACKSON.

KNIGHTS, GUARDS, ATTENDANTS, &c.

SCENE, Raby Caſtle, in Durham.

PROLOGUE.

Written by Mr. GARRICK.

Spoken by Mrs. BULKELY.

THO' I'm a female, *and the rule is ever,*
For us, in Epilogue, to beg your favour,
Yet now I take the lead—and, leaving art
And envy to the men—with a warm heart,
A woman *here I come—to take a* woman's part.
No little jealousies my mind perplex,
I come, the friend *and* champion *of my sex;*
I'll prove, ye fair, that let us have our swing,
We can, as well as men, do any thing;
Nay, better too, perhaps—for now and then,
These times produce some bungling among men,
In spite of lordly wits—with force and ease,
Can't we write plays, or damn 'em, if we please?
The men, who grant not much, allow us charms—
Are eyes, shapes, dimples, then, our only arms?
To rule this man our sex dame Nature teaches;
Mount the high horse we can, and make long speeches;
Nay, and with dignity, some wear the breeches;
And why not wear 'em?—We shall have your votes,
While some of t' other sex wear petticoats.
Did not a Lady Knight, *late* Chevalier,
A brave, smart soldier to your eyes appear?
Hey! presto! pass! his sword *becomes a* fan,
A comely woman *rising from the* man.

The

The French their Amazonian maid invite—
She goes—alike well skill'd to talk or write,
Dance, ride, negociate, scold, coquet, or fight.
If she should set her heart upon a rover,
And he prove false, she'd kick her faithless lover.
The Greeks *and* Romans *own our boundless claim—*
The Muses, Graces, Virtues, Fortune, Fame,
Wisdom and Nature too; they women *call;*
With this sweet flatt'ry *—yet they mix some gall—*
'Twill out—the Furies *too are* females *all.*
The pow'rs of Riches, Physic, War, and Wine,
Sleep, Death, and Devils too—are masculine.
Are we unfit to rule?—a poor suggestion!
Austria *and* Russia *answer well that question.*
If joy from sense and matchless grace arise,
With your own treasure, Britons, *bless your eyes:*
If such there are—sure, in an humbler way,
The sex, without much guilt, may write a play:
That they've done nobler things, there's no denial;
With all your judgment, then, prepare for trial—
Summon your critic pow'rs; your manhood summon,
A brave man will protect, *not* hurt *a* woman:
Let us wish modestly to share with men,
If not the force, *the* feather *of the* pen.

EPI-

EPILOGUE.

Written by Mr. GARRICK.

Spoken by Mr. LEE LEWES.

I Muſt, will ſpeak—I hope my dreſs and air
Announce the man of faſhion, and no player;
Tho' gentlemen are now forbid the ſcenes,
Yet have I ruſh'd thro' heroes, kings, and queens;
Reſolv'd, in pity to this poliſh'd age,
To drive theſe ballad-heroes from the ſtage—
" To drive the deer with hound and horn,
" Earl Percy took his way;
" The child may rue, that is unborn,
" The hunting of that day."
A pretty baſis, truly, for a modern play!
What! ſhall a ſcribbling, ſenſeleſs woman dare
To your refinements offer ſuch coarſe fare?
Is Douglas, or is Percy, fir'd with paſſion,
Ready for love or glory, death to daſh on,
Fit company for modern ſtill-life men of faſhion?
Such madneſs will our hearts but ſlightly graze,
We've no ſuch frantic nobles now a-days.
Heart-ſtrings, like fiddle-ſtrings, vibrate no tone,
Unleſs they're tun'd in perfect uniſon;
And youths of yore, with ours can ne'er agree—
They're in too ſharp, ours in too flat a key.
Could we believe old ſtories, thoſe ſtrange fellows
Married for love—could of their wives be jealous—

Nay,

Nay, conſtant to 'em too—and, what is worſe,
The vulgar ſouls thought cuckoldom a curſe.
Moſt wedded pairs had then one purſe, one mind,
One bed too—ſo prepoſterouſly kind—
From ſuch barbarity (thank heav'n) we're much refin'd.
Old ſongs their happineſs at home record,
From home they ſep'rate carriages abhorr'd—
One horſe ſerv'd both—my lady rode behind my lord.
'Twas death alone could ſnap their bands aſunder—
Now tack'd ſo ſlightly, not to ſnap's the wonder.
Nay, death itſelf could not their hearts divide,
They mix'd their love with monumental pride,
For, cut in ſtone, they ſtill lie ſide by ſide.
But why theſe gothic anceſtors produce?
Why ſcour their ruſty armours? What's the uſe?
'Twould not your nicer optics much regale,
To ſee us beaux bend under coats of mail;
Should we our limbs with iron doublets bruiſe,
Good heav'n! how much court-plaiſter we ſhould uſe;
We wear no armour now—but on our ſhoes.
Let not with barbariſm true taſte be blended,
Old vulgar virtues cannot be defended,
Let the dead reſt—we living can't be mended.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The French Drama, founded on the famous old Story of Raoul de Coucy, ſuggeſted to the Author ſome Circumſtances in the firſt part of this Tragedy.

PERCY,

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE, *A Gothic Hall.*

Enter EDRIC *and* BERTHA.

BERTHA.

WHAT may this mean? Earl Douglas has injoin'd thee
To meet him here in private?

EDRIC.

Yes, my ſiſter,
And this injunction I have oft receiv'd;
But when he comes, big with ſome painful ſecret,
He ſtarts, looks wild, then drops ambiguous hints,
Frowns, heſitates, turns pale, and ſays 'twas nothing;
Then ſtarts as ſtrange, and by his anxious care
To compoſe himſelf at eaſe, betrays the pain

BERTHA.

Since my short ſojourn here, I've mark'd this Earl,
And tho' the ties of blood unite us cloſely,
I ſhudder at his haughtineſs of temper,
Which not his gentle wife, the bright Elwina,
Can charm to reſt. Ill are their ſpirits pair'd,
His is the ſeat of frenzy, her's of ſoftneſs,
His love is tranſport, her's, is trembling duty,
Rage in his ſoul is as the whirlwind fierce,
While her's ne'er felt the pow'r of that rude paſſion.

EDRIC.

Perhaps the mighty ſoul of Douglas mourns,
Becauſe inglorious love detains him here,
While our bold knights, beneath the Chriſtian ſtandard,
Preſs to the bulwarks of Jeruſalem.

BERTHA.

Tho' every various charm adorns Elwina,
And tho' the noble Douglas doats to madneſs,
Yet ſome dark myſtery involves their fate:
The canker grief devours Elwina's bloom,
And on her brow meek reſignation ſits,
Hopeleſs, yet uncomplaining.

EDRIC.

'Tis moſt ſtrange.

BERTHA.

Once, not long ſince, ſhe thought herſelf alone;
'Twas then the pent-up anguiſh burſt its bounds;
With broken voice, claſped hands, and ſtreaming eyes,
She call'd upon her father, call'd him cruel,
And that her duty claim'd far other recompence.

EDRIC.

EDRIC.

Perhaps the abſence of the good Lord Raby,
Who, at her nuptials, quitted this fair caſtle,
Reſigning it to her, may thus affect her.
Haſt thou e'er queſtion'd her, good Birtha?

BIRTHA.

Often;
But hitherto in vain, and yet ſhe ſhews me
Th' endearing kindneſs of a ſiſter's love;
But if I ſpeak of Douglas——

EDRIC.

See! he comes.
It would offend him ſhou'd he find you here.

Enter DOUGLAS.

How! Edric and his ſiſter in cloſe conference?
Do they not ſeem alarm'd at my approach?
And ſee, how ſuddenly they part! Now, Edric,

[Exit Birtha.

Was this well done? or was it like a friend,
When I deſir'd to meet thee here alone,
With all the warmth of truſting confidence,
To lay my boſom naked to thy view,
And ſhew thee all its weakneſs, was it well
To call thy ſiſter here, to let her witneſs
Thy friend's infirmity?—perhaps to tell her——

EDRIC.

My lord, I nothing know; I came to learn.

DOUGLAS.

Nay then thou doſt ſuſpect there's ſomething wrong!

EDRIC.

If we were bred from infancy together,
If I partook in all thy youthful griefs,
And every joy thou knew'st was doubly mine,
Then tell me all the secret of thy soul:
" Or have these few short months of separation,
" The only absence we have ever known,
" Have these so rent the bands of love asunder,
" That Douglas should distrust his Edric's truth?

DOUGLAS.

My friend, I know thee faithful as thou'rt brave,
And I will trust thee—but not now, good Edric,
'Tis past, 'tis gone, it is not worth the telling,
'Twas wrong to cherish what disturb'd my peace;
I'll think of it no more.

EDRIC.

Transporting news!
I fear'd some hidden trouble vex'd your quiet.
In secret I have watch'd——

DOUGLAS.

Ha! watch'd in secret?
A spy? employ'd, perhaps, to note my actions?
What have I said? Forgive me, thou art noble!
Yet do not press me to disclose my grief,
For when thou know'st it, I perhaps shall hate thee
As much, my Edric, as I hate myself
For my suspicions, I am ill at ease.

EDRIC.

How will the fair Elwina grieve to hear it!

DOUGLAS.

Hold, Edric, hold—thou hast touch'd the fatal string
That wakes me into madness. Hear me then,
But let the deadly secret be secur'd
With bars of adamant in thy close breast.
Think on the curse which waits on broken oaths;
A knight is bound by more than vulgar ties,
And perjury in thee were doubly damn'd,
Well then, the king of England—

EDRIC.

Is expected
From distant Palestine.

DOUGLAS.

Forbid it, heaven,
For with him comes—

EDRIC.

Ah! who?

DOUGLAS.

Peace, peace,
For see Elwina's here. Retire, my Edric;
When next we meet thou shalt know all. Farewel.
[*Exit Edric.*
Now to conceal with care my bosom's anguish,
And let her beauty chase away my sorrows!
Yes, I wou'd meet her with a face of smiles—
But 'twill not be.

Enter

Enter ELWINA.

ELWINA.

Alas, 'tis ever thus!
Thus ever clouded is his angry brow. (*Aside.*

DOUGLAS.

I were too bleſt, Elwina, cou'd I hope
You met me here by choice, or that your boſom
Shar'd the warm tranſports mine muſt ever feel
At your approach.

ELWINA.

My lord, if I intrude,
The cauſe which brings me claims at leaſt forgiveneſs:
I fear you are not well, and come, unbidden,
Except by faithful duty, to enquire,
If haply in my power, my little power,
I have the means to miniſter relief
To your affliction?

DOUGLAS.

What unwonted goodneſs!
O I were bleſt above the lot of man,
If tenderneſs, not duty, brought Elwina;
Cold, ceremonious, and unfeeling duty,
That wretched ſubſtitute for love: But know,
The heart demands a heart; nor will be paid
With leſs than what it gives. E'en now, Elwina,
The gliſtening tear ſtands trembling in your eyes
Which caſt their mournful ſweetneſs on the ground,
As if they fear'd to raiſe their beams to mine,
And read the language of reproachful love.

ELWINA.

ELWINA.

My lord, I hop'd the thousand daily proofs
Of my obedience——

DOUGLAS.

Death to all my hopes!
Heart rending word! obedience? what's obedience?
'Tis fear, 'tis hate, 'tis terror, 'tis aversion,
'Tis the cold debt of ostentatious duty,
Paid with insulting caution, to remind me
How much you tremble to offend a tyrant
So terrible as Douglas.—" O Elwina——
" While duty measures the regard it owes,
" With scrupulous precision, and nice justice,
" Love never reasons, but profusely gives,
" Gives like a thoughtless prodigal its all,
" And trembles then, lest it has done too little."

ELWINA.

Indeed I'm most unhappy that my cares,
And my solicitude to please, offend.

DOUGLAS.

True tenderness is less solicitous,
Less prudent and more fond; th' enamour'd heart
Conscious it loves, and blest in being lov'd,
Repoles on the object it adores,
And trusts the passion it inspires and feels.—
Thou hast not learnt how terrible it is
To feed a hopeless flame.—But hear, Elwina,
Thou most obdurate, hear me.——

ELWINA.

Say, my lord,
For your own lips shall vindicate my fame.

Since

Since at the altar I become your wife;
Can malice charge me with an act, a word,
I ought to blush at? Have I not still liv'd
As open to the eye of observation,
As fearless innocence should ever live?
I call attesting angels to be witness,
If in my open deeds, or secret thought,
My conduct, or my heart, they've ought discern'd
Which did not emulate their purity.

DOUGLAS.

This vindication e'er you were accus'd,
"This warm defence, repelling all attacks
"E'er they are made, and construing casual words
"To formal accusations, trust me, Madam"
Shews rather an alarm'd and vigilant spirit,
For ever on the watch to guard its secret,
Than the sweet calm of fearless innocence.
Who talk'd of guilt? Who testified suspicion?

ELWINA.

Learn, Sir, that virtue, while 'tis free from blame,
Is modest, lowly, meek, and unassuming;
Not apt, like fearful vice, to shield its weakness,
Beneath the studied pomp of boastful phrase,
Which swells to hide the poverty it shelters;
But when this virtue feels itself suspected,
Insulted, set at nought, its whiteness stain'd,
It then grows proud, forgets its humble worth,
And rates itself above its real value.

DOUGLAS.

I did not mean to chide! But think, O think,
What pangs must rend this fearful, doating heart,
To see you sink impatient of the grave,
To feel, distracting thought, to doubt your hate of me!

ELWINA.

ELWINA.

What if the ſlender thread by which I hold
This poor precarious being ſoon muſt break;
Is it Elwina's crime, or heav'n's decree?
Yet I ſhall meet, I truſt, the king of terrors,
Submiſſive and reſign'd, without one pang,
One fond regret at leaving this gay world.

DOUGLAS.

Yes, Madam, there is one, one man ador'd,
For whom your ſighs will heave, your tears will flow,
For whom this hated world will ſtill be dear,
For whom you ſtill wou'd live——

ELWINA.

Hold, hold, my lord,
What may this mean?

DOUGLAS.

Ah! I have gone too far,
What have I ſaid?——Your father, ſure, your father,
The good Lord Raby may at leaſt expect
One tender ſigh.

ELWINA.

Alas, my lord, I thought
The precious incenſe of a daughter's ſighs
Might riſe to heav'n, and not offend its ruler.

DOUGLAS.

'Tis true; yet Raby is no more belov'd
Since he beſtow'd his daughter's hand on Douglas:
That was a crime the dutiful Elwina

Can never pardon; and believe me, Madam,
My love's so nice, so delicate my honour,
I am asham'd to owe my happiness
To ties which make you wretched. [*Exit Douglas.*

ELWINA.

Ah! how's this?
Tho' I have ever found him fierce and rash,
Full of obscure surmises, and dark hints,
Till now he never ventur'd to accuse me.
Yet there is one, one man belov'd, ador'd,
For whom your tears will flow—these were his words—
And then the wretched subterfuge of Raby—
How poor th' evasion!—But my Birtha comes.

Enter BIRTHA.

BIRTHA.

Crossing the Portico I met Lord Douglas,
Disorder'd were his looks, his eyes shot fire;
He call'd upon your name with such distraction,
I fear'd some sudden evil had befall'n you.

ELWINA.

Not sudden; no, long has the storm been gathering,
Which threatens speedily to burst in ruin,
On this devoted head.

BIRTHA.

I ne'er beheld
Your gentle soul so ruffled; yet I've mark'd you,
While others thought you happiest of the happy,
Blest with whate'er the world call's great or good,
With

With all that nature, all that fortune gives,
I've mark'd you bending with a weight of sorrow.

ELWINA.

O I will tell thee all! thou couldst not find
An hour, a moment in Elwina's life,
When her full heart so long'd to ease its burthen,
And pour its sorrows in thy friendly bosom:
Hear then with pity, hear my tale of woe.
And, O forgive, kind nature, filial piety,
If my presumptuous lips arraign a father!
Yes, Birtha, that belov'd, that cruel father,
Has doom'd me to a life of hopeless anguish,
To die of grief e'er half my days are number'd,
Doom'd me to give my trembling hand to Douglas,
'Twas all I had to give, my heart was Percy's.

BIRTHA.

What do I hear?

ELWINA.

My misery, not my crime.
Long since the battle 'twixt the rival houses,
Of Douglas and of Percy, for whose hate
This mighty globe's too small a Theatre,
One summer's morn my father chas'd the Deer,
On Cheviot Hills, Northumberland's fair domain.

BIRTHA.

On that fam'd spot where first the feuds commenc'd
Between the Earls?

ELWINA.

The fame. During the chace,
Some of my father's knights receiv'd an inſult
From the Lord Percy's herdſmen, churliſh foreſters,
Unworthy of the gentle blood they ſerv'd;
My father, proud and jealous of his honour,
(Thou know'ſt the fiery temper of our Barons)
Swore that Northumberland had been concern'd
In this rude outrage, nor wou'd hear of peace,
Or reconcilement which the Percy offer'd;
But bade me hate, renounce, and baniſh him.
O! 'twas a taſk too hard for all my duty,
I ſtrove, and wept, I ſtrove—but ſtill I lov'd.

BIRTHA.

Indeed 'twas moſt unjuſt; but ſay what follow'd?

ELWINA.

Why ſhou'd I dwell on the diſaſtrous tale?
Forbid to ſee me, Percy ſoon embark'd,
With our great king againſt the Saracen.
Soon as the jarring kingdoms were at peace,
Earl Douglas, whom till then I ne'er had ſeen,
Came to this caſtle, 'twas my hapleſs fate
To pleaſe him.—Bertha! thou can'ſt tell what follow'd
But who ſhall tell the agonies I felt?
My barbarous father forc'd me to diſſolve
The tender vows himſelf had bid me form——
He dragg'd me trembling, dying, to the altar,
I ſigh'd, I ſtruggled, fainted, and complied.

BIRTHA.

Did Douglas know a marriage had been once
Propos'd 'twixt you and Percy?

EL-

ELWINA.

If he did,
He thought, like you, it was a match of policy,
Nor knew our love surpass'd our father's prudence.

BERTHA.

Should he now find he was the instrument
Of the Lord Raby's vengeance?

ELWINA.

'Twere most dreadful!
My father lock'd this motive in his breast,
And feign'd to have forgot the Chace of Cheviot.
Some moons have now completed their slow course
Since my sad marriage.—Percy still is absent.

BERTHA.

Nor will return before his sov'reign comes.

ELWINA.

Talk not of his return! this coward heart
Can know no thought of peace but in his absence.
How, Douglas here again? some fresh alarm!

Enter DOUGLAS, *agitated, with letters in his hand.*

DOUGLAS.

Madam, your pardon——

EL-

ELWINA.

What disturbs my lord?

DOUGLAS.

Nothing.—Disturb? I ne'er was more at ease.
These letters from your father give us notice
He will be here to-night.—He further adds
The king's each hour expected.

ELWINA.

How? the King?
Said you the king?

DOUGLAS.

And 'tis Lord Raby's pleasure
That you among the foremost bid him welcome.
You must attend the court.

ELWINA.

Must I, my lord?

DOUGLAS.

Now to observe how she receives the news! (*Aside.*

ELWINA.

I must not,—cannot.—By the tender love
You have so oft profess'd for poor Elwina,
Indulge this one request—O let me stay!

DOUGLAS.

Enchanting sounds! she does not wish to go—
(*Aside.*

EL-

ELWINA.

The bustling world, the pomp which waits on greatness,
Ill suits my humble, unambitious soul;—
Then leave me here, to tread the safer path
Of private life; here, where my peaceful course
Shall be as silent as the shades around me;
Nor shall one vagrant wish be e'er allow'd
To stay beyond the bounds of Raby Castle.

DOUGLAS.

O music to my ears! (*Aside.*)—Can you resolve
To hide those wondrous beauties in the shade,
Which rival kings wou'd cheaply buy with empire?
Can you renounce the pleasures of a court,
Whose roofs resound with minstrelsy and mirth?

ELWINA.

My lord, retirement is a wife's best duty,
And virtue's safest station is retreat.

DOUGLAS.

My soul's in transports! (*Aside.*)—But can you forego
What wins the soul of woman—admiration?
A world, where charms inferior far to yours,
Only presume to shine when you are absent?
Will you not long to meet the public gaze?
Long to eclipse the fair, and charm the brave?

ELWINA.

These are delights in which the mind partakes not.

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

I'll try her farther. *(Aside.)*
(Takes her hand, and looks ſtedfaſtly at her as he ſpeaks.)
But reflect once more,
When you ſhall hear that England's gallant peers,
Freſh from the fields of war, and gay with glory,
All vain with conqueſt, and elate with fame,
When you ſhall hear theſe princely youths contend,
In many a tournament for beauty's prize,
When you ſhall hear of revelry, and maſkings,
Of mimic combats, and of feſtive halls,
Of lances ſhiver'd in the cauſe of love,
Will you not then repent, then wiſh your fate,
Your happier fate had till that hour reſerv'd you
For ſome plum'd conqueror?

ELWINA.

My fate, my lord,
Is now bound up with yours.

DOUGLAS.

Here let me kneel——
Yes, I will kneel, and gaze, and weep, and wonder;
Thou paragon of goodneſs!—pardon, pardon,
(Kiſſes her hand.)
I am convinc'd—I can no longer doubt,
Nor talk, nor hear, nor reaſon, nor reflect.
—I muſt retire, and give a looſe to joy.
[Exit Douglas.

BIRTHA.

The king returns.

ELWINA.

ELWINA.

And with him Percy comes!

BIRTHA.

You needs must go.

ELWINA.

Shall I solicit ruin,
And pull destruction on me ere its time?
I, who have held it criminal to name him?
I will not go——I disobey thee, Douglas,
But disobey thee to preserve thy honour.

End of the First Act.

ACT II.

SCENE, *The Hall.*

DOUGLAS, *Speaking as he enters.*

SEE that the traytor inſtantly be ſeiz'd,
And ſtrictly watch'd: let none have acceſs to him.
O jealouſy, thou aggregate of woes!
Were there no hell, thy torments wou'd create one.
But yet ſhe may be guiltleſs—may? ſhe muſt.
How beautiful ſhe look'd! pernicious beauty!
Yet innocent, as bright, ſeem'd the ſweet bluſh
That mantled on her cheek. But not for me,
But not for me thoſe breathing roſes blow!
And then ſhe wept—what! can I bear her tears?
Well—let her weep—her tears are for another;
O did they fall for me, to dry their ſtreams,
I'd drain the choiceſt blood that feeds this heart,
Nor think the drops I ſhed were half ſo precious.
(*He ſtands in a muſing poſture.*)

Enter Lord RABY.

RABY.

Sure I miſtake—Am I in Raby Caſtle?
Impoſſible! that was the ſeat of ſmiles;
And Cheerfulneſs, and Joy, were houſehold gods.

I us'd

I us'd to ſcatter pleaſures when I came,
And ev'ry ſervant ſhar'd his lord's delight.
But now Suſpicion and Diſtruſt dwell here,
And Diſcontent maintains a ſullen ſway.
Where is the ſmile unfeign'd, the joyful welcome,
Which cheer'd the ſad, beguil'd the pilgrim's pain,
And made dependency forget its bonds?
Where is the ancient, hoſpitable hall,
Whoſe vaulted roof once rung with harmleſs mirth,
Where every paſſing ſtranger was a gueſt,
And every gueſt a friend? I fear me much,
If ſome our nobles ſcorn their rural ſeats,
Their ruſtic greatneſs, and their vaſſals love,
Freedom, and Engliſh grandeur, are no more!

DOUGLAS. (advancing.)

My lord, you are welcome.

RABY.

Sir, I truſt I am;
But yet, methinks, I ſhall not feel I'm welcome,
Till my Elwina bleſs me with her ſmiles:
She was not wont with linging ſtep to meet me,
Or greet my coming with a cold embrace;
Now, I extend my longing arms in vain.
My child, my darling, does not come to fill them.
O they were happy day, when ſhe wou'd fly
To meet me from the camp, or from the chace,
And with her fondneſs overpay my toils!
How eager wou'd her tender hands unbrace
The ponderous armour from my war-worn limbs,
And pluck the helmet which oppos'd her kiſs!

DOUGLAS.

O ſweet delights that never muſt be mine!

RABY.

What do I hear?

DOUGLAS.

Nothing; enquire no farther.

RABY.

My lord, if you reſpect an old man's peace,
If e'er you doated on my much-lov'd child,
As 'tis moſt ſure you made me think you did,
Then, by the pangs which you may one day feel,
When you, like me, ſhall be a fond, fond father,
And tremble for the treaſure of your age,
Tell me, what this alarming ſilence means?
You ſigh, you do not ſpeak, nay more, you hear not?
Your lab'ring ſoul turns inward on itſelf,
As there were nothing but your own ſad thoughts
Deſerv'd regard. Does my child live?

DOUGLAS.

She does.

RABY.

To bleſs her father!

DOUGLAS.

And to curſe her huſband!

RABY.

Ah! have a care, my lord, I'm not ſo old—

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

Nor I ſo baſe that I ſhould tamely bear it;
Nor am I ſo inur'd to infamy,
That I can ſay without a burning bluſh,
She lives to be my curſe.

RABY.

How's this?

DOUGLAS.

I thought
The lily op'ning to the heav'n's ſoft dews,
Was not ſo fragrant, and was not ſo chaſte.

RABY.

Has ſhe prov'd otherwiſe? I'll not believe it.
Who has traduc'd my ſweet, my innocent, child?
Yet ſhe's too good to 'ſcape calumnious tongues.
I know that Slander loves a lofty mark:
It ſaw her ſoar a flight above her fellows,
And hurl'd its arrow to her glorious height,
To reach her heart, and bring her to the ground.

DOUGLAS.

Had the raſh tongue of Slander ſo preſum'd,
My vengeance had not been of that ſlow ſort,
To need a prompter; nor ſhould any arm,
No, not a father's, dare diſpute with mine,
The privilege to die in her defence.
None dares accuſe Elwina, but——

RABY.

But who?

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

But Douglas.

RABY.

(puts his hand to his sword.)

You?—O spare my age's weakness!
You do not know what 'tis to be a father,
You do not know, or you would pity me;
The thousand tender throbs, and nameless feelings,
The dread to ask, and yet the wish to know,
When we adore and fear; but wherefore fear?
Does not the blood of Raby fill her veins?

DOUGLAS.

Percy!—know'st thou that name?

RABY.

How? what of Percy?

DOUGLAS.

He loves Elwina, and my curses on him,
He is belov'd again.

RABY.

I'm on the rack!

DOUGLAS.

Not the two Theban brothers bore each other
Such deep, such deadly hate, as I and Percy.

RABY.

But tell me of my child.

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS (*not minding him.*)

As I and Percy!
When at the marriage rites, O rites accurs'd!
I seiz'd her trembling hand, she started back,
Cold horror thrill'd her veins, her tears flow'd fast.
Fool that I was, I thought 'twas maiden fear,
Dull, doating ignorance! beneath those terrors,
Hatred for me, and love for Percy lurk'd.

RABY.

What proof of guilt is this?

DOUGLAS.

Ever since our marriage
Our days have still been cold and joyless all;
"Painful restraint, and hatred ill disguis'd,
"Her sole return for all my waste of fondness."
This very morn I told her 'twas your will
She should repair to court, with all those graces,
Which first subdu'd my soul, and still enslave it,
She begg'd to stay behind in Raby Castle,
For courts, and cities had no charms for her.
Curse my blind love! I was again ensnar'd,
And doated on the sweetness which deceiv'd me.
Just at the hour she thought I should be absent,
(For chance cou'd ne'er have tim'd their guilt so well,)
Arriv'd young Hartcourt, one of Percy's knights,
Strictly enjoin'd to speak to none but her,
I seiz'd the miscreant; hitherto he's silent,
But tortures soon shall force him to confess.

RABY.

Percy is absent—They have never met.

DOUG-

DOUGLAS.

At what a feeble hold you grasp for succour!
Will it content me that her person's pure?
No, if her alien heart doats on another,
She is unchaste were not that other Percy.
Let vulgar spirits basely wait for proof,
She loves another—'tis enough for Douglas.

RABY.

Be patient.

DOUGLAS.

Be a tame convenient husband?
And meanly wait for circumstantial guilt?
No—I am nice as the first Cæsar was,
And start at bare suspicion. *(going.)*

RABY *(holding him.)*

Douglas, hear me;
Thou hast nam'd a Roman husband; if she's false,
I mean to prove myself a Roman father. *[Exit Douglas.*
This marriage was my work, and thus I'm punish'd!

Enter ELWINA.

ELWINA.

Where is my father? let me fly to meet him,
O let me clasp his venerable knees,
And die of joy in his belov'd embrace.

RABY *(avoiding her embrace.*

Elwina!

ELWINA.

And is that all? so cold?

RABY.

RABY *(sternly.)*
Elwina!

ELWINA.
Then I'm undone indeed! How ſtern his looks!
I will not be repuls'd, I am your child,
The child of that dear mother you ador'd;
You ſhall not throw me off, I will grow here,
And like the patriarch, wreſtle for a bleſſing.

RABY *(holding her from him.)*
Before I take thee in this aged arms,
Preſs thee with tranſport to this heaving heart,
And give a looſe to all a parent's fondneſs,
Anſwer, and ſee thou anſwer me as truly
As if the dread enquiry came from heav'n:—
Does no interior ſenſe of guilt confound thee?
Canſt thou lay all thy naked ſoul before me?
Can thy obſequious eye encounter mine?
Canſt thou endure the probe, and never ſhrink?
Can thy firm hand meet mine and never tremble?
Art thou prepar'd to meet the rigid judge?
Or to embrace the fond, the melting father?

ELWINA.
Myſterious heav'n! to what am I reſerv'd?

RABY.
Shou'd ſome raſh man, regardleſs of thy fame,
And in defiance of thy marriage vows,
Preſume to plead a guilty paſſion for thee,
What woud'ſt thou do?

ELWINA.
What honour bids me do.

RABY.

Come to my arms! (*they embrace.*

ELWINA.

My father!

RABY.

Yes, Elwina,
Thou art my child—thy mother's perfect image.

ELWINA.

Forgive these tears of mingled joy and doubt;
For why that question? who should seek to please
The desolate Elwina?

RABY.

But if any
Should so presume, can'st thou resolve to hate him,
Whate'er his name, whate'er his pride of blood,
Whate'er his former arrogant pretensions?

ELWINA.

Ha!

RABY.

Dost thou falter? Have a care, Elwina.

ELWINA.

Sir, do not fear me; am I not your daughter?

RABY.

Thou hast a higher claim upon thy honour;
Thou art Earl Douglas' Wife.

EL-

ELWINA (*weeps.*)

I am indeed!

RABY.

Unhappy Douglas!

ELWINA.

Has he then complain'd?
Has he presum'd to sully my white fame?

RABY.

He knows that Percy——

ELWINA.

Was my destin'd husband;
By your own promise, by a father's promise,
And by a tie more strong, more sacred still,
Mine, by the fast firm bond of mutual love.

RABY.

Now, by my fears, thy husband told me truth.

ELWINA.

If he has told thee that thy only child
Was forc'd, a helpless victim to the altar,
Torn from his arms, who had her virgin heart,
And forc'd to make false vows to one she hated,
Then I confess that he has told thee truth.

RABY.

Her words are barbed arrows in my heart.
But 'tis too late. (*Aside.*) Thou hast appointed Harcourt
To see thee here by stealth in Douglas' absence.

ELWINA.

No, by my life, nor knew I till this moment
That Harcourt was return'd. Was it for this
I taught my heart to ſtruggle with its feelings?
Was it for this I bore my wrongs in ſilence?
When the fond ties of early love were broken,
Did my weak ſoul break out in fond complaints?
Did I reproach thee? Did I call thee cruel?
No—I endur'd it all, and wearyd heaven
To bleſs the father who deſtroy'd my peace.

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

My lord, a knight, Sir Hubert as I think,
But newly landed from the holy wars,
Intreats admittance.

RARY.

Let the warrior enter.

[*Exit Meſſenger.*

All private intereſts ſink at his approach;
All ſelfiſh cares be for a moment baniſh'd!
I've now no child, no kindred but my country.

ELWINA.

Weak heart be ſtill, for what haſt thou to fear?

Enter Sir HUBERT.

RARY.

Welcome, thou gallant knight, Sir Hubert, welcome!

Welcome

Welcome to Raby Caſtle!—In one word,
Is the king ſafe? Is Paleſtine ſubdued?

SIR HUBERT.

The king is ſafe, and Paleſtine ſubdued.

RABY.

Bleſt be the god of armies! Now, Sir Hubert,
By all the ſaints thou'rt a right noble knight!
O why was I too old for this cruſade?
I think it wou'd have made me young again,
Cou'd I, like thee, have ſeen the hated Creſcent,
Yield to the Chriſtian croſs.—How now, Elwina!
What! cold at news which might awake the dead!
If there's a drop in thy degenerate veins
That glows not now, thou'rt not Raby's daughter.
It is religion's cauſe, the cauſe of heav'n!

ELWINA.

When policy aſſumes religion's name,
And wears the ſanctimonious garb of faith,
Only to colour fraud, and licenſe murder,
War then is tenfold guilt.

RABY.

Blaſpheming girl!

ELWINA.

'Tis not the croſier, nor the pontiff's robe,
The ſaintly look, nor elevated eye,
Nor Paleſtine deſtroy'd, nor Jordan's banks
Delug'd with blood of ſlaughter'd infidels.
No, nor th' extinction of the Eaſtern world,
Nor all the mad, pernicious, bigot-rage

Of

Of your crusades, can bribe that pow'r who sees
The motive with the act. O blind to think
That cruel war can please the prince of peace!
He who erects his altar in the heart,
Abhors the sacrifice of human blood,
And all the false devotion of that zeal,
Which massacres the world he died to save.

RABY.

O impious rage! If thou would'st shun my curse
No more, I charge thee.——Tell me, good Sir Hubert,
Say, have our arms atchiev'd this glorious deed,
(I fear to ask,) without much Christian bloodshed?

ELWINA.

Now heaven support me! *(Aside.)*

Sir HUBERT.

My good lord of Raby,
Imperfect is the sum of human glory!
Wou'd I cou'd tell thee that the field was won,
Without the death of such illustrious knights,
As make the high flush'd cheek of victory pale.

ELWINA.

Why shou'd I tremble thus? *(Aside.)*

RABY.

Who have we lost?

Sir HUBERT.

The noble Clifford, Walsingham, and Grey,

Sir

Sir Harry Haſtings, and the valiant Pembroke.
All men of ſhorteſt note.

RABY.

O that my name
Had been enroll'd in ſuch a liſt of heroes!
If I was too infirm to ſerve my country,
I might have prov'd my love by dying for her.

ELWINA.

Were there no more?

Sir HUBERT.

But few of noble blood.
But the brave youth who gain'd the palm of glory,
The flower of knighthood, and the plume of war,
Who bore his banner foremoſt in the field,
Yet conquer'd more by mercy than the ſword,
Was Percy.

ELWINA.

Then he lives! (*Aſide.*)

RABY.

Did he? Did Percy?
O gallant boy, then I'm thy foe no more;
Who conquers for my country is my friend!
His fame ſhall add new glories to a houſe,
Where never maid was falſe, nor knight diſloyal.

Sir HUBERT.

You do embalm him, lady, with your tears:
They grace the grave of glory where he lies,
He died the death of honour.

EL-

Sir HUBERT.

Beneath the towers of Solyma he fell.

ELWINA.

Oh!

Sir HUBERT.

Look to the lady.

(*Elwina faints in her father's arms*)

RARY.

Gentle knight, retire—

'Tis an infirmity of nature in her sex,
She even sympathizes at the tale of blood.
She will be well anon—mean time, Sir Hubert,
You'll grace our castle with your friendly sojourn.

Sir HUBERT.

I must return with speed—health to the lady.

[*Exit Hubert.*

RARY.

Look up, Elwina. Should her husband come,
Yet she revives not.

Enter DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

My lord, I fear you have

Her

Her gentle nature could not brook your sternness.
She wakes, she stirs, she feels returning life.
My love! *(He takes her hand.)*

ELWINA.

O Percy!

DOUGLAS. *(Starts.)*

Do my senses fail me?

ELWINA.

My Percy, 'tis Elwina calls.

DOUGLAS.

Hell, Hell!

RABY.

Retire awhile, my daughter.

ELWINA.

Douglas here?
My father and my husband!——O for pity?
(Exit Elwina, casting a look of anguish on both.)

DOUGLAS.

Now, now confess she well deserves my vengeance!
Before my face to call upon my foe!

RABY.

Upon a foe who has no power to hurt thee.
Earl Percy's slain.

DOUGLAS.

Sir HUBERT.

Look to the lady.

(*Elwina faints in her father's arms*)

RARY.

Gentle knight, retire—
'Tis an infirmity of nature in her
She ever trembles at the tale of blood.
She will be well anon—mean time, Sir Hubert,
You'll grace our caſtle with your friendly ſojourn.

Sir HUBERT.

I muſt return with ſpeed—health to the lady.

[*Exit Hubert.*

RARY.

Look up, Elwina. Should her huſband come,
Yet ſhe revives not.

Enter DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

My lord, I fear you

Her gentle nature could not brook your sternness.
She wakes, she stirs, she feels returning life.
My love! *(He takes her hand.)*

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O Percy!

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Retire awhile, my daughter.

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My father and my husband!——O for pity?
[Exit Elwina, casting a look of anguish on both.]

DOUGLAS.

Now, now confess she well deserves my vengeance!
Before my face to call upon my foe!

RABY.

Upon a foe who has no power to hurt thee.
Earl Percy's slain.

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

Live again.—But hold—
Did she not weep? she did, and wept for Percy.
If she laments him, he's my rival still,
And not the grave can bury my resentment.

RABY.

The truly brave are still the truly gen'rous;
Now, Douglas, is the time to prove thee both.
If it be true that she did once love Percy,
Thou hast no more to fear, since he is dead.
Release young Harcourt, let him see Elwina,
'Twill serve a double purpose, 'twill at once
Prove Percy's death, and thy unchang'd affection.
Be gentle to my child, and win her heart,
By confidence, and unreproaching love.

DOUGLAS.

By heav'n thou counsel'st well: it shall be done.
Go get him free, and let him have admittance
To my Elwina's presence.

RABY.

Farewel, Douglas.
Shew thou believ'st her faithful and she'll prove so.
[*Exit Raby.*

DOUGLAS.

Northumberland is dead—that thought is peace!
Her heart may yet be mine, transporting hope!
Percy was gentle, ev'n a foe avows it,
And I'll be milder than a summer's breeze.
Yes, thou most lovely, most ador'd of women,
I'll copy every virtue, every grace,
Of my bless'd rival, happier ev'n in death
To be thus lov'd, than living to be scorn'd.

End of Act the Second.

ACT III.

SCENE, *A Garden at Raby Caſtle, with a Bower.*

Enter PERCY *and Sir* HUBERT.

Sir HUBERT.

THAT Percy lives, and is return'd in ſafety,
More joys my ſoul, than all the mighty conqueſts
That ſun beheld, which roſe on Syria's ruin.

PERCY.

I've told thee, good Sir Hubert, by what wonder
I was preſerv'd, tho' number'd with the ſlain.

Sir HUBERT.

'Twas ſtrange indeed!

PERCY.

'Twas heav'n's immediate work!
But let me now indulge a dearer joy,

Talk of a richer gift of Mercy's hand;
A gift ſo precious to my doating heart,
That life preſerv'd is but a ſecond bleſſing.
O Hubert, let my ſoul indulge its ſoftneſs!
The hour, the ſpot is ſacred to Elwina.
This was her fav'rite walk; I well remember,
(For who forgets that loves as I have lov'd?)
'Twas in that very bower ſhe gave this ſcarf,
Wrought by the hand of love; ſhe bound it on,
And, ſmiling, cried, Whate'er befal us, Percy,
Be this the ſacred pledge of faith betwenn us.
I knelt, and ſwore, call'd every pow'r to witneſs,
No time, no circumſtance, ſhou'd force it from me;
But I wou'd loſe my life and that together,
Here I repeat my vow.

Sir HUBERT.

Is this the man
Beneath whoſe ſingle arm an hoſt was cruſh'd?
He, at whoſe name the Saracen turn'd pale?
And when he fell, victorious armies wept,
And mourn'd a conqueſt they had bought ſo dear?
How has he chang'd the trumpet's martial note,
And all the ſtirring clangor of the war,
For the ſoft melting of the lover's lute!
Why are thine eyes ſtill bent upon the bower?

PERCY.

O Hubert, Hubert, to a fond enamour'd,
There is a ſort of local ſympathy,
Which, when we view the ſcenes of early paſſion,
Paints the bright image of the object lov'd,
In ſtronger colours, than remoter ſcenes
Cou'd ever paint it, realiſing ſhade,

Dreſſes

Dreſſes it up in all the charms it wore,
Talks to it nearer, frames its anſwers kinder,
Gives form to fancy, and embodies thought.

Sir HUBERT.

I ſhould not be believ'd in Percy's camp,
If I ſhou'd tell them that their gallant leader,
The thunder of the war, the bold Northumberland,
Renouncing Mars, diſſolv'd in amorous wiſhes,
Loiter'd in ſhades, and pin'd in roſy bowers,
To catch a tranſient glance of two bright eyes.

PERCY.

Enough of conqueſt, and enough of war!
Ambition's cloy'd—the heart reſumes its rights.
When England's king, and England's good requir'd,
This arm not idly the keen falchion brandiſh'd:
Enough—for vaunting miſbecomes a ſoldier.
I live, I am return'd—am near Elwina!
Seeſt thou thoſe turrets? Yes, that caſtle holds her.
But wherefore tell thee this? for thou haſt ſeen her.
How look'd, what ſaid ſhe? Did ſhe hear the tale
Of my imagin'd death without emotion?

Sir HUBERT.

Percy, thou haſt ſeen the muſk-roſe newly blown,
Diſcloſe its baſhful beauties to the ſun,
Till an unfriendly, chilling ſtorm deſcended,
Cruſh'd all its bluſhing glories in their prime,
Bow'd its fair head, and blaſted all its ſweetneſs,
So droop'd the maid, beneath the cruel weight
Of my ſad tale.

PERCY.

So tender and so true!

Sir HUBERT.

I left her fainting in her father's arms,
The dying flower yet hanging on the tree.
Ev'n Raby melted at the news I brought,
And envy'd thee thy glory.

PERCY.

Then I am bleſt!
His hate ſubdued, I've nothing more to fear.

Sir HUBERT.

My embaſſy diſpatch'd, I left the caſtle,
Nor ſpoke to any of Lord Raby's houſehold,
For fear the king ſhould chide the tardineſs
Of my return. My joy to find you living,
You have already heard.

PERCY.

But where is Harcourt?
Ere this he ſhou'd have ſeen her, told her all,
How I ſurviv'd, return'd——and how I love!
I tremble at the near approach of bliſs,
And ſcarcely can ſuſtain the joy which waits me.

Sir HUBERT.

Grant heaven the fair-one prove but half ſo true!

PERCY.

O ſhe is truth itſelf!

Sir

Sir HUBERT.

She may be chang'd,
Spite of her tears, her fainting, and alarms.
I know the ſex, know them as nature made 'em,
Not ſuch as lovers wiſh, and poets feign.

PERCY.

To doubt her virtue were ſuſpecting heaven,
'Twere little leſs than infidelity!
And yet I tremble. Why does terror ſhake
Theſe firm-ſtrung nerves? But 'twill be ever thus,
When fate prepares us more than mortal bliſs,
And gives us only human ſtrength to bear it.

Sir HUBERT.

What beam of brightneſs breaks thro' yonder gloom?

PERCY.

Hubert—ſhe comes! by all my hopes ſhe comes!
'Tis ſhe—that bliſsful viſion is Elwina!
But ah! what mean thoſe tears?—She weeps for me!
O tranſport!—go.—I'll liſten unobſerved,——
And for a moment taſte the precious joy,
The banquet of a tear which falls for love.

[*Exit Sir Hubert.*

[*Percy goes into the Bower.*

Enter

Enter ELWINA.

ELWINA.

Shall I not weep, and have I then no cause?
If I cou'd break th' eternal bands of death,
And wrench the ſceptre from his iron graſp;
If I cou'd bid the yawning ſepulchre
Reſtore to life its long committed duſt;
If I could teach the laughs'ring hand of war,
To give me back my dear, my murder'd Percy,
Then I indeed might once more ceaſe to weep.

[*Percy enters out of the Bower.*]

PERCY.

Then ceaſe, for Percy lives.

ELWINA.

Protect me heav'n!

PERCY.

O joy unſpeakable! My life! my love!
End of my toils, and crown of all my cares!
Kind as conſenting peace, as conqueſt bright,
Dearer than arms, and lovelier than renown!

ELWINA.

It is his voice—it is, it is my Percy!
And doſt thou live?

PERCY.

I never liv'd till now.

ELWINA.

ELWINA.

And did my ſighs, and did my ſorrows reach thee?
And art thou come at laſt to dry my tears?
How did'ſt thou 'ſcape the fury of the foe?

PERCY.

Thy guardian genius hover'd o'er the field,
And turn'd the hoſtile ſpear from Percy's breaſt,
Leſt thy fair image ſhould be wounded there.
But Harcourt ſhould have told thee all my fate,
How I ſurviv'd——

ELWINA.

Alas! I have not ſeen him.
Oh! I have ſuffer'd much.

PERCY.

Of that no more;
For every minute of our future lives,
Shall be ſo bleſs'd, that we will learn to wonder,
How we cou'd ever think we were unhappy.

ELWINA.

Percy —I cannot ſpeak.

PERCY.

Thoſe tears how eloquent!
I would not change this motionleſs, mute joy,
For the ſweet ſtrains of angels! I look down
With pity on the reſt of human kind,
However great may be their fame of happineſs,
And think their biggeſt fate has giv'n them nothing.

Not giving thee; or granting ſome ſmall bleſſing,
Denies them my capacity to feel it.

ELWINA.

Alas! what mean you?

PERCY.

Can I ſpeak my meaning?
'Tis of ſuch magnitude that words would wrong it;
But ſurely my Elwina's faithful boſom,
Shou'd beat in kind reſponſes of delight,
And feel, but never queſtion what I mean.

ELWINA.

Hold, hold, my heart, thou haſt much more to ſuffer!

PERCY.

Let the ſlow form, and tedious ceremony
Wait on the ſplendid victims of ambition.
Love ſtays for none of theſe. Thy father's ſoften'd,
He will forget the fatal Cheviot Chace;
Raby is brave, and I have ſerv'd my country;
I wou'd not boaſt, it was for thee I conquer'd.
Then come, my love.

ELWINA.

O never, never, never.

PERCY.

Am I awake? Is that Elwina's voice?

ELWINA.

Percy, thou muſt adore'd—and moſt [illegible]'d,
If ever fortitude ſuſtain'd thy ſoul,

When vulgar minds have ſunk beneath the ſtroke,
Let the imperial ſoul now ſupport thee.——
If thou can'ſt be ſo wondrous merciful,
Do not, O do not curſe me!—but thou wilt,
Thou muſt—for I have done a fearful deed,
A deed of wild deſpair, a deed of horror.
I am, I am——

PERCY.

Speak, ſay, what art thou?

ELWINA.

Married.

PERCY.

Oh!

ELWINA.

Percy, I think I begg'd thee not to curſe me;
But now I do revoke the fond petition.
Speak! eaſe thy burſting ſoul; reproach, upbraid,
O'erwhelm me with thy wrongs——I'll bear it all.

PERCY.

Open, thou earth, and hide me from her ſight!
Did'ſt thou not bid me curſe thee?

ELWINA.

Mercy! mercy!

PERCY.

And have I ſcap'd the Saracen's fell ſword,
Only to periſh by Elwina's guilt?
I would have bar'd my boſom to the foe,
I would have died, had I but known you wiſh'd it.

ELWINA.

Percy, I lov'd thee most when most unkind,
Yes, by these tears I did.

PERCY.

Married! just heav'n!
Married? to whom? Yet wherefore should I know!
It cannot add freſh horrors to thy crime,
Or my deſtruction.

ELWINA.

Oh! I will add to both.
How ſhall I tell? Prepare for ſomething dreadful.
Haſt thou not heard of—Douglas?

PERCY.

Why 'tis well!
Thou awful power why waſte thy wrath on me?
Why arm omnipotence to cruſh a worm?
I cou'd have fall'n without this waſte of ruin.
Married to Douglas! By my wrongs I like it;
'Tis perfidy compleat, 'tis finiſhed falſehood,
'Tis adding freſh perdition to the ſin,
And filling up the meaſure of offence!

ELWINA.

Oh! 'twas my father's deed; he made his child
An inſtrument of vengeance on thy head.
He wept and threaten'd, ſooth'd me, and commanded.

PERCY.

And you complied, moſt dutifully complied!

ELWINA.

I cou'd withstand his fury; but his tears,
Ah, they undid me! Percy dost thou know
The cruel tyranny of tenderness?
Hast thou e'er felt a father's warm embrace?
Hast thou e'er seen a father's flowing tears,
And known that thou cou'dst wipe those tears away?
If thou hast felt, and hast resisted these,
Then thou may'st curse my weakness; but if not,
Thou canst not pity, for thou canst not judge.

PERCY.

Let me not hear the music of thy voice,
Or I shall love thee still, I shall forget
Thy fatal marriage, and my savage wrongs.

ELWINA.

Dost thou not hate me, Percy?

PERCY.

Hate thee? Yes,
As dying martyrs hate the righteous cause
Of that bless'd Power for whom they bleed—I hate thee.

(They look at each other in silent agony.

Enter HARCOURT.

HARCOURT.

Forgive, my lord, your faithful knight——

PERCY.

Come, Harcourt,
Come and behold the wretch who once was Percy.

——HAR-

HARCOURT.

With grief I've learn'd the whole unhappy tale.
Earl Douglas, whose suspicion never sleeps——

PERCY.

What, is the tyrant jealous?

ELWINA.

Hear him, Percy!

PERCY.

I will command my rage—Go on.

HARCOURT.

Earl Douglas
Knew by my arms, and my accoutrements,
That I belong'd to you; he question'd much,
And much he menac'd me, but both alike
In vain, he then arrested and confin'd me.

PERCY.

Arrest my knight! The Scot shall answer it.

ELWINA.

How came you now releas'd?

HARCOURT.

Your noble father
Obtain'd my freedom, having learn'd from Hubert
The news of Percy's death. The good old Lord,
Hearing the king's return, has left the Castle
To do him homage.

To Percy.

Sir, you had best retire;
Your safety is endanger'd by your stay;
I fear shou'd Douglas know——

PERCY.

Shou'd Douglas know?
Why what new magic's in the name of Douglas,
That it shou'd strike Northumberland with fear?
Go, seek the haughty Scot, and tell him—no—
Conduct me to his presence.

ELWINA.

Percy, hold;
Think not 'tis Douglas—'tis—

PERCY.

I know it well——
Thou mean'st to tell me 'tis Elwina's husband;
But that inflames me to superior madness.
This happy husband, this triumphant Douglas,
Shall not insult my misery with his bliss.
I'll blast the golden promise of his joys.
Conduct me to him—nay, I will have way——
Come let us seek this husband.

ELWINA.

Percy, hear me,
When I was robb'd of all my peace of mind,
My cruel fortune left me still one blessing,
One solitary blessing, to console me;
It was my fame.—'Tis a rich jewel, Percy,
And I must keep it spotless, and unsoil'd:
But thou wou'dst plunder what e'en Douglas spar'd,
And rob this single gem of all its brightness.

PERCY.

Go—thou wast born to rule the fate of Percy.
Thou art my conqueror still.

ELWINA.

What noise is that?

(Harcourt goes to the side of the Stage.

PERCY.

Why art thou thus alarm'd?

ELWINA.

——Alas! I feel
The cowardice and terrors of the wicked,
Without their sense of guilt.

HARCOURT.

My lord,—'tis Douglas.

ELWINA.

Fly, Percy, and for ever?

PERCY.

Fly from Douglas?

ELWINA.—

Then stay, barbarian, and at once destroy
My life and fame.

PERCY.

That thought is death. I go.
My honour to thy dearer honour yields.

ELWINA.

Yet, yet thou art not gone!

PERCY.

Farewel, farewel!

(Exit Percy.

ELWINA.

I dare not meet the searching eye of Douglas.
I muſt conceal my terrors.

Douglas at the Side with his ſword drawn, Edric holds him.

DOUGLAS.

Give me way.

EDRIC.

Thou ſhalt not enter.

DOUGLAS. *(ſtruggling with Edric.*

If there were no hell,
It would defraud my vengeance of its edge,
And he ſhould live.

(Breaks from Edric and comes forward.)

Curs'd chance! he is not here.

ELWINA. *(going.*

I dare not meet his fury.

DOUGLAS.

See ſhe flies
With ev'ry mark of guilt—Go, ſearch the Bow'r,

(Aſide to Edric.

He ſhall not thus eſcape, Madam, return. (*Aloud.*
Now honeſt Douglas learn of her to feign. (*Aſide.*
Alone, Elwina? who juſt parted hence?
(*With affected compoſure.*

ELWINA.

My lord, 'twas Harcourt; ſure you muſt have met him.

DOUGLAS.

O exquiſite diſſembler! No one elſe?

ELWINA.

My lord!

DOUGLAS.

How I enjoy her criminal confuſion!
You tremble, Madam.

ELWINA.

Wherefore ſhou'd I tremble?
By your permiſſion Harcourt was admitted;
'Twas no myſterious, ſecret introduction.

DOUGLAS.

(And yet you ſeem alarm'd.—If Harcourt's preſence
Thus agitates each nerve, makes ev'ry pulſe
Thus wildly throb, and the warm tides of blood,
Mount in quick ruſhing tumults to your cheek;
If friendſhip can excite ſuch ſtrong emotions,
What tremors had a lover's preſence cauſed?

ELWINA.

Ungenerous man!

DOUGLAS.

I fear upon her terrors. *(Aside.*
The ſtory of his death was well contriv'd; *(To her.*
But it affects not me; I have a wife,
Compar'd with whom cold Dian was unchaſte.
(Takes her hand.
But mark me well—tho' it concerns not you—
If there's a ſin more deeply black than others,
Diſtinguiſh'd from the liſt of common crimes,
A legion in itſelf, and doubly dear
To the dark prince of hell, it is—hypocriſy.
(Throws her from him and Exit.

ELWINA.

Yes, I will bear his fearful indignation!
Thou melting heart be firm as adamant;
Ye ſhatter'd nerves be ſtrung with manly force,
That I may conquer all my ſex's weakneſs,
Nor let this bleeding boſom lodge one thought,
Cheriſh one wiſh, or harbour one deſire,
That Angels may not hear, and Douglas know.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV.

SCENE, *The Hulk.*

Enter DOUGLAS, *his sword drawn and bloody in one hand, in the other a letter.* HARCOURT *wounded.*

DOUGLAS.

TRAITOR no more. This letter shews thy office.
Twice hast thou robb'd me of my dear revenge.
I took thee for thy leader.—Thy base blood
Wou'd stain the noble temper of my sword,
But as the pander to thy master's lust,
Thou justly fall'st by a wrong'd husband's hand.

HARCOURT.

Thy wife is innocent.

DOUGLAS.

Take him away.

HARCOURT.

Percy, revenge my fall!

[*Guards bear Harcourt in.*

DOUG-

DOUGLAS.

Now for the letter!
He begs once more to see her,—so 'tis plain
They have already met!—but to the rest——
Reads,
"In vain you wish me to restore the scarf,
Dear pledge of love, while I have life I'll wear it,
'Tis next my heart; no pow'r shall force it thence,
Whene'er you see it in another's hand
Conclude me dead."—My curses on them both!
How tamely I peruse my shame! But thus,
Thus, let me tear the guilty vouchers
Which register my infamy. And thus,
Thus wou'd I scatter to the winds of heav'n,
The vile complotters of my foul dishonour.
[*Tears the letter in the utmost agitation.*

Enter EDRIC.

EDRIC.

My lord——

DOUGLAS.

(*In the utmost fury, not seeing Edric.*)
The scarf!

EDRIC.

Lord Douglas,

DOUGLAS.

(*still not hearing him.*)
Yes, the scarf!
Percy, I thank thee for the glorious thought!
I'll cherish it; 'twill sweeten all my pangs,
And add a higher relish to revenge!

EDRIC.

EDRIC.

My lord!

DOUGLAS.

How, Edric here?

EDRIC.

What new diſtreſs?

DOUGLAS.

Doſt thou expect I ſhou'd recount my ſhame?
Dwell on each circumſtance of my diſgrace,
And ſwell my infamy into a tale?
Rage will not let me—But—my wife is falſe.

EDRIC.

Art thou convin'd?

DOUGLAS.

The chronicles of hell
Cannot produce a falſer.—But what news
Of her curs'd paramour?

EDRIC.

He has eſcap'd.

DOUGLAS.

Haſt thou examin'd ev'ry avenue?
Each ſpot? The grove? the bower, her fav'rite haunt?

EDRIC.

I've ſearch'd them all.

DOUG-

DOUGLAS.

He ſhall be yet purſu'd.
Set guards at every gate.—Let none depart,
Or gain admittance here without my knowledge.

EDRIC.

What can their purpoſe be?

DOUGLAS.

Is it not clear?
Harcourt has rais'd his arm againſt my life?
He fail'd; the blow is now reſerv'd for Percy;
Then with his ſword freſh reeking from my heart,
He'll revel with that wanton o'er my tomb;
Nor will he bring her ought ſhe'll hold ſo dear,
As the curs'd hand with which he ſlew her huſband.
But he ſhall die! I'll drown my rage in blood,
Which I will offer as a rich libation,
On thy infernal altar, black Revenge?

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to the Garden.*

Enter ELWINA.

ELWINA.

Each avenue is ſo beſet with guards,
And lynx-ey'd Jealouſy ſo broad awake,
He cannot paſs unſeen. Protect him heav'n!

Enter BIRTHA.

My Birtha, is he ſafe? Has he eſcap'd!

BIR-

BIRTHA.

I know not. I dispatch'd young Harcourt to him,
To bid him quit the Castle, as you order'd,
Restore the scarf, and never see you more.
But how the hard injunction was receiv'd,
Or what has happen'd since, I'm yet to learn.

ELWINA.

O when shall I be eas'd of all my cares,
And in the quiet bosom of the grave
Lay down this weary head? I'm sick at heart!
Shou'd Douglas intercept his flight?

BIRTHA.

Be calm;
Douglas this very moment left the Castle,
With seeming peace.

ELWINA.

Ah, then indeed there's danger!
Birtha, whene'er Suspicion feigns to sleep,
'Tis but to make its careless prey secure.

BIRTHA.

Shou'd Percy once again entreat to see thee,
'Twere best admit him; from thy lips alone,
He will submit to hear his final doom,
Of everlasting exile.

ELWINA.

Birtha, no:
If honour wou'd allow the wife of Douglas
To meet his rival, yet I durst not do it.
Percy! too much this rebel heart is thine:

Too

Too deeply ſhould I feel each pang I gave;
I cannot hate—but I will baniſh thee.
Inexorable duty! O forgive,
If I can do no more!

BERTHA.

If he remains,
As I ſuſpect, within the caſtle walls,
'Twere beſt I ſought him out.

ELWINA.

Then leave me. I conjure thee—nor again
Endanger my repoſe. Yet, ere thou goeſt,
Before Bertha, tell him,
But Oh! with gentleneſs, with mercy tell him,
That we muſt never, never meet again.
The purport of thy tale muſt be ſevere,
But let thy tenderneſs embalm the wound.
My victim gives—O ſoften his deſpair!
But ſay—we meet no more.

Enter PERCY.

Raſh man, he's here!

(She attempts to go, he ſeizes her hand.)

PERCY.

I will be heard; nay, fly not; I will ſpeak;
Loſt as I am, I will not be denied
The mournful conſolation to complain.

ELWINA.

Percy, I charge thee, leave me.

PERCY.

I blush at my obedience, blush to think
I left thee here alone, to brave the danger
I now return to share.

ELWINA.

That danger's past:
Douglas was soon appeas'd; he nothing knows.
Then leave me, I conjure thee, nor again
Endanger my repose. Yet, e'er thou goest,
Restore the fatal

PERCY.

Unkind Elwina, never.
'Tis all that's left me of my buried joys,
All, which reminds me that I once was happy.
My letter told thee I would ne'er restore it.

ELWINA.

Letter? what letter?

(She attempts to seize her hand.)

PERCY.

That I sent by Harcourt.

ELWINA.

Which I have ne'er receiv'd. Douglas perhaps—
Who knows?

PERCY.

Harcourt, to elude his watchfulness,
Might prudently retire.

ELWINA.

Grant heav'n it prove ſo!

(Elwina going, Percy holds her.)

PERCY.

Hear me, Elwina, the moſt ſavage honour
Forbids not that poor grace,

ELWINA.

It bids me fly thee.

PERCY.

Then e'er thou go'ſt, if we indeed muſt part,
To ſooth the horrors of eternal exile,
Say but—thou pity'ſt me!

ELWINA *(weeps.)*

O Percy—pity thee!
Imperious honour;—ſurely I may pity him.
Yet, wherefore pity? no, I envy thee:
For thou haſt ſtill the liberty to weep,
In thee 'twill be no crime; thy tears are guiltleſs,
For they infringe no duty, ſtain no honour,
And blot no vow: but mine are criminal,
Are drops of ſhame which waſh the cheek of guilt,
And every tear I ſhed diſhonours Douglas.

PERCY.

I ſwear my jealous love e'en grudges thee
Thy ſad pre-eminence in wretchedneſs.

ELWINA.

Rouse, rouse, my slumb'ring virtue! Percy hear me.
Heav'n, when it gives such high-wrought souls as thine,
Still gives as great occasions to exert them.
If thou wast form'd so noble, great, and gen'rous,
'Twas to surmount the passions which enslave
The gross of humankind—Then think, O think,
She, whom thou once didst love, is now another's.

PERCY.

Go on—and tell me that that other's Douglas.

ELWINA.

Whate'er his name, he claims respect from me:
His honour's in my keeping, and I hold
The trust so pure, its sanctuary is Hurt,
Ev'n by thy presence.

PERCY.

Thou again hast conquer'd.
Celestial Virtue, like the angel-spirit,
Whose flaming sword defended Paradise,
Stands guard on ev'ry charm.—Elwina, yes,
To triumph over Douglas, we'll be virtuous.

ELWINA.

'Tis not enough to be,—we must appear so:
Great souls disdain the shadow of offence,
Nor must their whiteness wear the stain of guilt.

PERCY.

I ſhall retract—I dare not gaze upon thee;
My feeble virtue ſtaggers, and again
The fiends of jealouſy torment and haunt me.
They tear my heart ſtrings.——Oh!

ELWINA.

No more;
But ſpare my injur'd honour the affront
To vindicate itſelf.

PERCY.

But love!

ELWINA.

But glory!

PERCY.

Enough! a ray of thy ſublimer ſpirit,
Has warm'd my dying honour to a flame!
One effort and 'tis done. The world ſhall ſay,
When they ſhall ſpeak of my diſaſtrous love,
Percy deſerv'd Elwina though he loſt her.
Fond tears blind me not yet! a little longer,
Let my ſad eyes a little longer gaze,
And leave their laſt beams here.

ELWINA. *(turns from him.*

I do not weep.

PERCY.

Not weep? Then why thoſe eyes avoiding mine?

And

And why that broken voice? thoſe trembling accents?
That ſigh which rends my ſoul?

ELWINA.

No more, no more.

PERCY.

That pang decides it. Come—I'll die at once;
Thou pow'r ſupreme! take all the length of days,
And all the bleſſings kept in ſtore for me,
And add to her account.—Yet turn once more,
One little look, one laſt, ſhort glimpſe of day,
And then a long, dark night.—Hold, hold my heart,
O break not yet, while I behold her ſweetneſs;
For after this dear, mournful, tender moment,
I ſhall have nothing more to do with life.

ELWINA.

I do conjure thee go.

PERCY.

'Tis terrible to nature!
With pangs like theſe the ſoul and body part!
And thus, but Oh, with far leſs agony,
The poor departing wretch ſtill graſps at being,
Thus clings to life, thus dreads the dark unknown,
Thus ſtruggles to the laſt to keep his hold;
And when the dire convulſive groan of death
Diſlodges the ſad ſpirit—thus it ſtays
And fondly hovers o'er the form it lov'd.
Once, and no more—farewel, farewel!

ELWINA.

For ever!

(They look at each other for some time, then

[exit Percy.

After a pause,

'Tis past—the conflict's past! retire my Birtha,
I wou'd address me to the throne of grace.

BIRTHA.

May heav'n restore that peace thy bosom wants!

[Exit Birtha.

ELWINA.

(kneels.

Look down, thou awful, heart-inspecting judge,
Look down, with mercy, on thy erring creature,
And teach my soul the lowliness it needs!
And if some sad remains of human weakness,
Shou'd sometimes mingle with my best resolves,
O breathe thy spirit on this wayward heart,
And teach me to repent th' intruding sin,
In its first birth of thought!

(*Noise without.*)

What noise is that?
The clash of swords! Shou'd Douglas be return'd?

Enter DOUGLAS *and* PERCY *fighting.*

DOUGLAS.

Yield, villain, yield.

PERCY.

Not till this good right arm
Shall fail its master.

DOUG-

DOUGLAS.

This to thy heart then.

PERCY.

Defend thy own.

(They fight. Percy disarms Douglas.)

DOUGLAS.

Confusion, death, and hell!

EDRIC. *(Without*

This way I heard the noise.

(Enter Edric and many Knights and Guards from every part of the Stage.)

PERCY.

Curs'd treachery!

But dearly will I sell my life.

DOUGLAS.

Seize on him.

PERCY.

I'm taken in the toils.

(Percy is surrounded by Guards, who take his sword.

DOUGLAS.

In the curs'd snare

Thou laid'st for me, traytor, thyself art caught.

ELWINA.

He never sought thy life.

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

Adulterefs, peace!
The villain Harcourt too——but he's at reſt.

PERCY.

Douglas, I'm in thy power, but do not triumph,
Percy's *betray'd*, not *conquer'd*. Come, diſpatch me.

ELWINA. *(to Douglas.*

O do not, do not kill him!

PERCY.

Madam, forbear;
For by the glorious ſhades of my great fathers,
Their godlike ſpirit is not ſo extinct,
That I ſhould owe my life to that vile Scot.
Tho' dangers cloſe me round on every ſide,
And death beſets me—I am Percy ſtill.

DOUGLAS.

Sorcereſs, I'll diſappoint thee—he ſhall die;
Thy minion ſhall expire before thy face,
That I may feaſt my hatred with your pangs,
And make his dying groans, and thy fond tears,
A banquet for my vengeance.

ELWINA.

Savage tyrant!
I wou'd have fallen a ſilent ſacrifice,
So thou had'ſt ſpar'd my fame.—I never wrong'd
thee.

PERCY.

She knew not of my coming;—I alone,
Have been to blame—Spite of her interdiction,
I hither came. She's pure as ſpotleſs ſaints.

ELWINA.

I will not be excus'd by Percy's crime;
So white my innocence it does not ask
The ſhade of others' faults to ſet it off;
Nor ſhall he need to ſully his fair fame,
To throw a brighter luſtre round my virtue.

DOUGLAS.

Yet he can only die—but death for honour!
Ye pow'rs of hell, who take malignant joy,
In human bloodſhed, give me ſome dire means,
Wild as my hate, and deſperate as my wrongs!

PERCY.

Enough of words. Thou know'ſt I hate thee, Douglas;
'Tis ſtedfaſt, fix'd, hereditary hate,
As thine for me; our fathers did bequeath it,
As part of our unalienable birthright,
Which nought but death can end.—Come, end it here.

ELWINA. *(kneels.)*

Hold, Douglas, hold!—not for myſelf I kneel,
I do not plead for Percy, but for thee:
Arm not thy hand againſt thy future peace,
Spare thy brave breaſt the tortures of remorſe,—
Stain not a life of unpolluted honour,
For oh! as ſurely as thou ſtrik'ſt at Percy,
Thou wilt for ever ſtab the fame of Douglas.

PERCY.

Finiſh the bloody work.

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

Then take thy wish.

PERCY.

Why doſt thou ſtart?

Percy bears his boſom, Douglas advances to ſtab him, and diſcovers the Scarf.

DOUGLAS.

Her ſcarf upon his breaſt!
The blaſting ſight converts me into ſtone;
Withers my powers like cowardice, or age,
Curdles the blood within my ſhiv'ring veins,
And palſies my bold arm.

PERCY. *(ironically to the Knights)*

Hear you, his friends!
Bear witneſs to the glorious, great exploit,
Record it in the annals of his race,
That Douglas the renown'd—the valiant Douglas,
Fenc'd round with guards, and ſafe in his own caſtle,
Surpris'd a knight unarm'd, and bravely ſlew him.

DOUGLAS. *(throwing away his dagger.*

'Tis true—I am the very ſtain of knighthood.
How is my glory dimm'd!

ELWINA.

It blazes brighter!
Douglas was only brave—he now is gen'rous!

PERCY.

This action has reſtor'd thee to thy rank,
And makes thee worthy to contend with Percy.

DOUGLAS.

Thy joy will be as ſhort as 'tis inſulting.
(*to Elwina*)
And thou, imperious boy, reſtrain thy boaſting.
Thou haſt ſav'd my honour, not remov'd my hate,
For my ſoul loaths thee for the obligation.
Give him his ſword.

PERCY.

Now thou'rt a noble foe,
And in the field of honour I will meet thee,
As knight encountring knight.

ELWINA.

Stay, Percy, ſtay,
Strike at the wretched cauſe of all, ſtrike here,
Here ſheathe thy thirſty ſword, but ſpare my husband.

DOUGLAS.

Turn, Madam, and addreſs thoſe vows to me,
To ſpare the precious life of him you love.
Ev'n now you triumph in the death of Douglas,
Now your looſe fancy kindles at the thought,
And wildly rioting in lawleſs hope,
Indulges the adultery of the mind.
But I'll defeat that wiſh—Guards bear her in.
Nay, do not ſtruggle. (*She is borne in.*

PERCY.

Let our deaths ſuffice,
And rev'rence virtue in that form inſhrin'd.

DOUGLAS.

Provoke my rage no farther.—I have kindled
The burning torch of never-dying vengeance
At Love's expiring lamp.—But mark me, friends,
If Percy's happier genius ſhou'd prevail,
And I ſhou'd fall, give him ſafe conduct hence,
Be all obſervance paid him.—Go, I follow thee.
(Aſide to Edric.
Within I've ſomething for thy private ear.

PERCY.

Now ſhall this mutual fury be appeas'd!
Theſe eager hands ſhall ſoon be drench'd in ſlaughter!
Yes—like two famiſh'd vultures ſnuffing blood,
And panting to deſtroy, we'll ruſh to combat;
Yet I've the deepeſt, deadlieſt cauſe of hate,
I am but Percy, thou'rt—Elwina's huſband.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V.

SCENE, *Elwina's Apartment.*

ELWINA.

THOU who in judgment ſtill remember'ſt mercy,
Look down upon my woes, preſerve my huſband.
Preſerve my huſband! Ah, I dare not aſk it;
My very pray'rs may pull down ruin on me!
If Douglas ſhou'd ſurvive, what then becomes
Of—him—I dare not name? And if he conquers
I've ſlain my huſband. Agonizing ſtate!
When I can neither hope, nor think, nor pray,
But guilt involves me. Sure to know the worſt,
Cannot exceed the torture of ſuſpenſe,
When each event is big with equal horror,
(Looks out.
What no one yet? This ſolitude is dreadful!
My horrors multiply!

Enter BIRTHA.

Thou meſſenger of woe!

BIRTHA.

Of woe indeed!

EL-

ELWINA.

How, is my husband dead?
Oh speak.

BIRTHA.

Your husband lives.

ELWINA.

Then farewel Percy!
He was the tenderest, truest!—Bless him heav'n,
With crowns of glory, and immortal joys!

BIRTHA.

Still are you wrong; the combat is not over.
Stay, flowing tears, and give me leave to speak.

ELWINA.

Thou say'st that Percy and my husband live:
Then why this sorrow?

BIRTHA.

What a task is mine?

ELWINA.

Thou talk'st as if I were a child in grief,
And scarce acquainted with calamity.
Speak out, unfold thy tale whate'er it be,
For I am so familiar with affliction,
It cannot come in any shape will shock me.

BIRTHA.

How shall I speak? Thy husband——

ELWINA.

What of Douglas?

BIR-

BIRTHA.

When all was ready for the fatal combat,
He call'd his chosen knights, then drew his sword,
And on it made them swear a solemn oath,
Confirm'd by ev'ry rite religion bids,
That they wou'd see perform'd his last request.
Be it whate'er it wou'd. Alas! they swore.

ELWINA.

What did the dreadful preparation mean?

BIRTHA.

Then to their hands he gave a poison'd cup,
Compounded of the deadliest herbs, and drugs;
Take this, said he, it is a husband's legacy;
Percy may conquer—and—I have a wife!
If Douglas falls, Elwina must not live.

ELWINA.

Spirit of Herod! Why 'twas greatly thought!
'Twas worthy of the bosom which conceiv'd it!
Yet 'twas too merciful to be his own.
Yes, Douglas, yes, my husband, I'll obey thee,
And bless thy genius which has found the means
To reconcile thy vengeance with my peace,
The deadly means to make obedience pleasant.

BIRTHA.

O spare, for pity spare my bleeding heart:
Inhuman to the last. Unnatural! poison!

ELWINA.

My gentle friend, what is there in a name?
The means are little where the end is kind.
If it disturb thee do not call it poison;
Call it the sweet oblivion of my cares,
My balm of woe, my cordial of affliction,

The

The drop of mercy to my fainting soul,
My kind dismission from a world of sorrow,
My cup of bliss, my passport to the skies.

BIRTHA.

Hark! what alarm is that?

ELWINA.

The combat's over!

Birtha goes out.

(Elwina stands in a fix'd attitude, her hands clasp'd.

Now gracious heav'n sustain me in the trial,
And bow my spirit to thy great decrees!

Re-enter BIRTHA.

(Elwina looks stedfastly at her without speaking.

BIRTHA.

Douglas is fall'n.

ELWINA.

Bring me the poison.

BIRTHA.

Never.

ELWINA.

Where are the knights? I summon you—approach!
Draw near ye awful ministers of fate,
Dire instruments of posthumous revenge!
Come—I am ready; but your tardy justice
Defrauds the injur'd dead.—Go, haste, my friend,
See that the castle be securely guarded,
Let ev'ry gate be barr'd—prevent his entrance.

BIRTHA.

Whose entrance?

ELWINA.

His—the murderer of my husband.

BIRTHA.

He's single, we have hosts of friends.

ELWINA.

No matter;
Who knows what love and madness may attempt?
But here I swear by all that binds thee good,
Never to see him more.—Unhappy Douglas!
O if thy troubled spirit still is conscious
Of our past woes, look down and hear me swear,
That when the legacy thy rage bequeathed me,
Works at my heart and conquers struggling nature,
Ev'n in that agony I'll still be faithful.
She who cou'd never love, shall yet obey thee,
Weep thy hard fate, and die to prove her truth.

BIRTHA.

O unexampled virtue!

(a noise without.

ELWINA.

Heard you nothing?
By all my fears th' insulting conqueror comes.
O save me, shield me!

Enter DOUGLAS.

Heav'n and earth, my husband!

DOUGLAS.

Yes——
To blast thee with the sight of him thou hat'st.

Of

Of him thou haſt wrong'd, Adultereſs, 'tis thy huſband.

ELWINA (*kneels.*)

Bleſt be the fountain of eternal mercy,
This load of guilt is ſpar'd me! Douglas lives!
Perhaps both live! (*to Birtha*) Cou'd I be ſure of that,
The poiſon were ſuperfluous, joy wou'd kill me.

DOUGLAS.

Be honeſt now, for once, and curſe thy ſtars;
Curſe thy deteſted fate which brings thee back
A hated huſband, when thy guilty ſoul
Revell'd in fond, imaginary joys
With my too happy rival; when thou flew'ſt,
To gratify, impatient, boundleſs paſſion,
And join adulterous luſt to bloody murder;
Then to reverſe the ſcene! polluted woman!
Mine is the tranſport now, and thine the pang.

ELWINA.

Whence ſprung the falſe report that thou had'ſt fall'n?

DOUGLAS.

To give thy guilty breaſt a deeper wound,
To add a deadlier ſting to diſappointment,
I rais'd it—I contriv'd—I ſent it thee.

ELWINA.

Thou ſeeſt me bold but bold in conſcious virtue.
—That my ſad ſoul may not be ſtain'd with blood,
That I may ſpend my few ſhort hours in peace,
And die in holy hope of heav'n's forgiveneſs,
Relieve the terrors of my lab'ring breaſt,
Say I am clear of murder—ſay he lives,
Say but that little word that Percy lives,

And Alps, and Oceans shall divide us ever,
As far as universal space can part us.

DOUGLAS.

Canst thou renounce him?

ELWINA.

Tell me that he lives,
And thou shalt be the ruler of my fate,
For ever hide me in a convent's gloom,
From cheerful day-light, and the haunts of men,
Where sad austerity, and ceaseless pray'r,
Shall share my uncomplaining day between them,

DOUGLAS.

O hypocrite! now vengeance to thy office.
I had forgot—Percy commends him to thee,
And by my hand——

ELWINA.

How—by thy hand?

DOUGLAS.

Has sent thee,
This precious pledge of love.

(He gives her Percy's Scarf)

ELWINA.

Then Percy's dead!

DOUGLAS.

He is.—O great revenge, thou now art mine!
See how convulsive sorrow rends her frame!
This, this is transport!—injur'd honour, now,
Receives its vast, its ample retribution.
She sheds no tears, her grief's too highly wrought;

'Tis

'Tis ſpeechleſs agony.—She muſt not faint—
She ſhall not 'ſcape her portion of the pain.
No! ſhe ſhall feel the fulneſs of diſtreſs,
And wake to keen perception of her loſs.

BIRTHA.

Monſter! Barbarian! leave her to her ſorrows.

ELWINA. *(In a low broken voice.)*

Douglas—think not I faint, becauſe thou ſee'ſt
The pale and bloodleſs cheek of wan deſpair.
Fail me not yet, my ſpirits; thou cold heart,
Cheriſh thy freezing current one ſhort moment,
And bear thy mighty load a little longer.

DOUGLAS.

Percy, I muſt avow it, bravely fought,—
Died as a hero ſhou'd;—but, as he fell,
Hear it, fond wanton, call'd upon thy name,
And his laſt guilty breath ſigh'd out—Elwina!
Come—give a looſe to rage, and feed my ſoul
With wild complaints, and womaniſh upbraidings.

ELWINA. *(In a low ſolemn voice.)*

No:
The ſorrow's weak that waſtes itſelf in words.
Mine is ſubſtantial anguiſh—deep, not loud:
I do not rave.——Reſentment's the return
Of common ſouls for common injuries.
Light grief is proud of ſtate, and courts compaſſion;
But there's a dignity in cureleſs ſorrow,
A ſullen grandeur which diſdains complaint.
Rage is for little wrongs—Deſpair is dumb.

[Exeunt Elwina and Birtha.

DOUG-

DOUGLAS.

Why this is well!—her ſenſe of woe is ſtrong!
The ſharp, keen tooth of gnawing Grief devours her,—
Feeds on her heart, and pays me back my pangs.
Since I muſt periſh, 'twill be glorious ruin:
I fall not ſingly, but, like ſome proud tower,
I'll cruſh ſurrounding objects in the wreck,
And make the devaſtation wide and dreadful.

Enter RABY.

RABY.

O whither ſhall a wretched father turn?
Where fly for comfort? Douglas, art thou here?
I do not aſk for comfort at thy hands,
I'd but one little caſket, where I lodg'd
My precious hoard of wealth, and, like an ideot,
I gave my treaſure to another's keeping,
Who threw away the gem, nor knew its value,
But left the plunder'd owner quite a beggar.

DOUGLAS.

What! art thou come to ſee thy race diſhonour'd?
And thy bright ſun of glory ſet in blood?
I wou'd have ſpar'd thy virtues, and thy age,
The knowledge of her infamy.

RABY.

'Tis falſe,
Had ſhe been baſe, this ſword had drank her blood.

DOUGLAS.

Ha! doſt thou vindicate the wanton?

RABY.

RABY.

Wanton?
Thou haſt defam'd a noble lady's honour—
My ſpotleſs child—in me behold her champion:
The ſtrength of Hercules will nerve this arm,
When lifted in defence of innocence.
The daughter's virtue for the father's ſhield,
Will make old Raby ſtill invincible.

(*Offers to draw.*

DOUGLAS.

Forbear.

RABY.

Thou doſt diſdain my feeble arm,
And ſcorn my age.

DOUGLAS.

There will be blood enough;
Nor need thy wither'd veins, old lord, be drain'd,
To ſwell the copious ſtream.

RABY.

Thou wilt not kill her?

DOUGLAS.

Oh, 'tis a day of horror!

Enter EDRIC *and* BIRTHA.

EDRIC.

Where is Douglas?
I come to ſave him from the deadlieſt crime
Revenge did ever meditate.

DOUGLAS.

What mean'ſt thou?

EDRIC.

EDRIC.

This instant fly, and save thy guiltless wife.

DOUGLAS.

Save that perfidious——!

EDRIC.

That much injur'd woman!

BIRTHA.

Unfortunate indeed, but O most innocent!

EDRIC.

In the last solemn article of death,
That truth-compelling state, when ev'n bad men
Fear to speak falsly, Percy clear'd her fame.

DOUGLAS.

I heard him—'Twas the guilty fraud of love.
The scarf, the scarf! that proof of mutual passion,
Giv'n but this day, to ratify their crimes!

BIRTHA.

What means my lord? This day? that fatal scarf
Was giv'n long since, a toy of childish friendship;
Long e'er your marriage, e'er you knew Elwina.

RABY.

'Tis I am guilty.

DOUGLAS.

Ha!

RABY.

I,—I alone.
Confusion, honour, pride, parental fondness

Dis-

Diſtract my ſoul.——Percy was not to blame,
He was—the deſtin'd huſband of Elwina!
He lov'd her—was belov'd,—and I approv'd.
The tale is long.——I chang'd my purpoſe ſince,
Forbad their marriage.

DOUGLAS.

And confirm'd my mis'ry!
Twice did they meet to-day—my wife and Percy.

RABY.

I know it.

DOUGLAS.

Ha! thou knew'ſt of my diſhonour?
Thou was a witneſs, an approving witneſs,
At leaſt a tame one!

RABY.

Percy came, 'tis true,
A conſtant, tender, but a guiltleſs lover.

DOUGLAS.

I ſhall grow mad indeed! a guiltleſs lover!
Percy, the guiltleſs lover of my wife!

RABY.

He knew not ſhe was married.

DOUGLAS.

How? is't poſſible?

RABY.

Douglas, 'tis true; both, both were innocent:
He, of her marriage, ſhe, of his return.

BIRTHA.

But now, when we believ'd thee dead, ſhe vow'd

Never to ſee thy rival. Inſtantly,
Not in a ſtart of momentary paſſion,
But with a martyr's dignity and calmneſs,
She bade me bring the poiſon.—

DOUGLAS.

Had'ſt thou done it,
Deſpair had been my portion! Fly, good Birtha,
Find out the ſuff'ring ſaint—deſcribe my penitence,
And paint my vaſt extravagance of fondneſs,
Tell her I love, as never mortal lov'd——
Tell her I know her virtues, and adore them——
Tell her I come, but dare not ſeek her preſence,
Till ſhe pronounce my pardon.

BIRTHA.

I obey.

[*Exit Birtha.*

RABY.

My child is innocent! ye choirs of ſaints,
Catch the bleſt ſounds—my child is innocent!

DOUGLAS.

O I will kneel, and ſue for her forgiveneſs,
And thou ſhall help me plead the cauſe of love,
And thou ſhalt weep—ſhe cannot ſure refuſe,
A kneeling huſband, and a weeping father.
Thy venerable cheek is wet already.

RABY.

Douglas! it is the dew of grateful joy!
My child is innocent! I now wou'd die,
Leſt fortune ſhou'd grow weary of her kindneſs,
And grudge me this ſhort tranſport.

DOUG-

DOUGLAS.

Where, where is ſhe?
My fond impatience brooks not her delay;
Quick let me find her, huſh her anxious ſoul,
And ſooth her troubled ſpirit into peace.

Enter BIRTHA.

BIRTHA.

O horror, horror, horror!

DOUGLAS.

Ah what mean'ſt thou?

BIRTHA.

Elwina——

DOUGLAS.

Speak——

BIRTHA.

Her grief wrought up to frenzy,
She has, in her delirium, ſwallow'd poiſon.

RABY.

Frenzy and poiſon!

DOUGLAS.

Both a huſband's gift;
But thus I do her juſtice.

As Douglas goes to ſtab himſelf, enter Elwina diſtracted, her hair diſhevell'd, Percy's Scarf in her hand.

ELWINA. *(goes up to Douglas.)*

What blood again? We cannot kill him twice
Soft, ſoft—no violence—he's dead already;——
I did it—Yes—I drown'd him with my tears;
But hide the cruel deed! I'll ſcratch him out
A ſhallow grave, and lay the green Sod on it;
Aye—and I'll bind the wild briar o'er the turf,
And plant a Willow there, a weeping Willow——

(She ſits on the ground.

But look you tell not Douglas, he'll diſturb him.
He'll pluck the willow up—and plant a thorn,
He will not let me ſit upon his grave,
And ſing all day, and weep and pray all night.

RABY.

Doſt thou not know me?

ELWINA.

Yes——I do remember
You had a harmleſs lamb.

RABY.

I had indeed!

ELWINA.

From all the flock you choſe her out a Mate,
In ſooth a fair one—you did bid her love it—
But while the Shepherd ſlept, the Wolf devour'd it.

RABY.

My heart will break. This is too much, too much.

ELWINA. *(ſmiling.)*

O 'twas a cordial draught—I drank it all.

RABY.

What means my child?

DOUGLAS.

The poiſon! Oh the poiſon!
Thou dear wrong'd innocence——

ELWINA.

Off—murderer, off!
Do not defile me with thoſe crimſon hands.

(Shews

(Shews the Scarf)

This is his winding ſheet—I'll wrap him in it—
I wrought it for my love—there—now I've dreſt him.
How brave he looks! my father will forgive him,
He dearly lov'd him once—but that is over.
See where he comes—beware my gallant Percy,
Ah! come not here, this is the cave of Death,
And there's the dark, dark Palace of Revenge!
See, the pale king ſits on his blood-ſtain'd throne!
He points to me—I come, I come, I come.

She faints, they run to her, Douglas takes up his Sword, and ſtabs himſelf.

DOUGLAS.

Thus, thus I follow thee.

EDRIC.

Hold thy raſh hand.

DOUGLAS.

It is too late. No remedy but this,
Cou'd med'cine a diſeaſe ſo deſperate.

RABY.

Ah ſhe revives!

DOUGLAS. *(raiſing himſelf.)*

She lives? bear, bear me to her!
We ſhall be happy yet.

He ſtruggles to get to her, but ſinks down.

It will not be—
O for a laſt embrace——Alas I faint—
She lives—Now death is terrible indeed——
Fair Spirit how I lov'd thee—O Elwina!

(Dies.

EL-

ELWINA.

Where have I been? The damps of death are on me.

RABY.

Look up my child; O do not leave me thus;
Pity the anguiſh of thy aged father.
Haſt thou forgot me?

ELWINA.

No—You are my father;
O you are kindly come to cloſe my eyes,
And take the kiſs of death from my cold lips.

RABY.

Do we meet thus?

ELWINA.

We ſoon ſhall meet in peace.
I've but a faint remembrance of the paſt——
But ſomething tells me—O thoſe painful ſtruggles!
Raiſe me a little—there—

(She ſees the body of Douglas.

What ſight is that?
A ſword, and bloody? Ah! and Douglas murder'd!

EDRIC.

Convinc'd too late of your unequal'd virtues,
And wrung with deep compunction for your wrongs,
By his own hand the wretched Douglas fell.

ELWINA.

This adds another, ſharper pang to death
O thou

O thou Eternal! take him to thy mercy,
Nor let this ſin be on his head, or mine!

RABY.

I have undone you all—the crime is mine!
O thou poor injur'd ſaint, forgive thy father,
He kneels to his wrong'd child.

ELWINA.

Now you are cruel.
Come near, my father, nearer—I wou'd ſee you.
But miſts and darkneſs cloud my failing ſight.
O Death! ſuſpend thy rights for one ſhort moment,
'Till I have ta'en a father's laſt embrace—
A father's bleſſing.—Once—and now 'tis over.
Receive me to thy mercy—gracious heaven.
She dies.

RABY.

She's gone! for ever gone! Cold, dead and cold.
Am I a father? Fathers love their children——
I murder mine! With impious pride I ſnatch'd
The bolt of vengeance from the hand of heav'n.
My puniſhment is great—but Oh! 'tis juſt.
My ſoul ſubmiſſive bows. A righteous God
Has made my crime become my chaſtiſement!

End of the Fifth Act.

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